

Talking Points
Southeast Tourism Society
Biloxi, Mississippi
Monday, March 19, 2007

- Welcome to Mississippi. We are proud of our distinct culture and heritage, and happy to share them with you.
- I would like to express my appreciation for the decision made by your board of directors to return to Mississippi. I understand this event was originally slated for North Carolina and, while that is a fine state, having you on the Mississippi Gulf Coast is a real statement of support in the post-Katrina world.
- This speaks volumes about how the tourism industry is one big family, looking out for one another. I am grateful.

[Brief update on recovery and rebuilding efforts on the Coast]

- On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina struck a grievous blow. Our state and our citizens bore the brunt of the worst natural disaster in American history, leaving unimaginable destruction.

- I have learned that an awful disaster brings out the best in most people. This has surely been the case in our state. The Mississippi spirit makes me proud.
- Relay the story of landing the Toyota plant – One factor was how we reacted after the hurricane – our Mississippi spirit.
- As you see, our Coast is bouncing back from the impact of Hurricane Katrina and many of the attractions visitors have come to enjoy – including world-class golf courses, casino gaming, special events such as Smoking The Sound, Cruising the Coast and outdoor recreational activities such as sport fishing – are back.

[Highlight various tourism related activities]

- Recently we began to place what will become a series of 122 Blues Trail markers. Mississippi is the Birthplace of America's Music. No other place can claim the phenomenal musical heritage and history that Mississippi can. With the Blues Trail one can trace the history of this deeply rooted music by visiting historical markers and sites found

in numerous locations throughout the state. Other heritage trails include our Civil War sites and the journey of the Civil Rights movement. Mississippi is proud to be the future home of a national Civil Rights museum.

- So, even post-Katrina – maybe I should say especially post-Katrina – we’ve embarked on an aggressive, ambitious plan to build tourism back bigger and better than ever.
- New incentives for attracting film-makers were in a bill I signed last week.

Major events are on Mississippi’s horizon:

- We’ll host the Southern Governor’s Association Conference here on the Coast in August.
- We are also hosting Travel South USA Showcase next year on the Coast.

- And, in 2009, we will host the National Governors Association.

[Closing]

- I hope the time you spend here will be enjoyable and productive. This is a great opportunity to enhance your professional skills and also visit with old friends and make new ones.
- In speaking to various tourism groups I have the feeling it is more of a family reunion. If this is your first visit, once again I welcome you. And if you have been to Mississippi before, it's good to have you back.

Thank you.